

ARTICLE 10.

Preservation, etc., of Scenic Beauty of Areas along Highways.

§ 136-122. Legislative findings and declaration of policy.

The General Assembly finds that the rapid growth and the spread of urban development along and near the State highways is encroaching upon or eliminating many areas having significant scenic or aesthetic values, which if restored, preserved and enhanced would promote the enjoyment of travel and the protection of the public investment in highways within the State and would constitute important physical, aesthetic or economic assets to the State. It is the intent of the General Assembly in enacting this statute to provide a means whereby the Department of Transportation may acquire the fee or any lesser interest or right in real property in order to restore, preserve and enhance natural or scenic beauty of areas traversed by the highways of the State highway system.

The General Assembly hereby declares that it is a public purpose and in the public interest of the people of North Carolina, to expend public funds, in connection with the construction, reconstruction or improvement of State highways, for the acquisition of the fee or any lesser interest in real property in the vicinity of public highways forming a part of the State highway system, in order to restore, preserve and enhance natural or scenic beauty. The General Assembly hereby finds, determines and declares that this Article is necessary for the immediate preservation and promotion of public convenience, safety and welfare. (1967, c. 1247, s. 1; 1973, c. 507, s. 5; 1977, c. 464, s. 7.1.)

§ 136-123. Restoration, preservation and enhancement of natural or scenic beauty.

(a) The Department of Transportation is hereby authorized and empowered to acquire by purchase, exchanges or gift, the fee-simple title or any lesser interest therein in real property in the vicinity of public highways forming a part of the State highway system, for the restoration, preservation and enhancement of natural or scenic beauty; provided that no lands, rights-of-way or facilities of a public utility as defined by G.S. 62-3(23), or of an electric membership corporation or telephone membership corporation, may be acquired, except that the Department of Transportation upon payment of the full cost thereof may require the relocation of electric distribution or telephone lines or poles; provided further, that such lands may be acquired by the Department of Transportation with the consent of the public utility or membership corporation.

(b) No landscaping or highway beautification project undertaken by the Department or any other unit of government may use oyster shells as a ground cover. The Department or any other unit of government that possesses oyster shells shall make them available to the Department of Environmental Quality, Division of Marine Fisheries, without remuneration, for use in any oyster bed revitalization programs or any other program that may use the shells. (1967, c. 1247, s. 2; 1973, c. 507, s. 5; 1977, c. 464, s. 7.1; 2007-84, s. 1; 2008-198, s. 4; 2015-241, s. 14.30(u).)

§ 136-124. Availability of federal aid funds.

The Department of Transportation shall not be required to expend any funds for the acquisition of property under the provisions of this Article unless federal aid funds are made available for this purpose. (1967, c. 1247, s. 3; 1973, c. 507, s. 5; 1977, c. 464, s. 7.1.)

§ 136-125. Regulation of scenic easements.

The Department of Transportation shall have the authority to promulgate rules and regulations governing the use, maintenance and protection of the areas or interests acquired under this Article. Any violation of such rules and regulations shall be a Class 1 misdemeanor. (1967, c. 1247, s. 4; 1973, c. 507, s. 5; 1977, c. 464, s. 7.1; 1993, c. 539, s. 997; 1994, Ex. Sess., c. 24, s. 14(c).)